

RIGHTS AND PERMISSIONS BY PAUL NATHAN



EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

✓ The CIA as an equal opportunity employer is a novel idea, and Sam Greenlee has based a novel on it. With a slight obfuscance in the direction of John le Carré, he has titled it "The Spook Who Sat by the Door."

✓ Greenlee, a black Chicagoan, now back in this country with his Dutch wife after a number of years overseas, had a tough time getting published. When I spoke to him recently on the phone, he was in the offices of Bantam Books. It seems that several months ago, at a London cocktail party, Marc Jaffe, the paperback company's editorial director, heard of "Spook," which had just been published in England. Subsequently, about to take-off for the States, Marc spotted a copy for sale at the airport and bought it. Once behind his desk again in New York, he proceeded to acquire both hard- and softcover rights for the U.S. The hardcover was quickly contracted to the new Richard W. Baron Publishing Company, which will bring out its edition in late October. Bantam will follow with the paperback early in 1970.

Before it finally appeared abroad, "Spook" had been rejected by many American houses—and quite a few in England, too. The tide turned when an editor of a small British firm enthusiastically recommended the manuscript to his superiors, who said no. The editor resigned and with a partner set up his own publishing operation. "Spook" came out under the fresh-minted imprint of Allison & Busby.

As described by its author, "Spook" satirizes the whole color problem, including the current scramble to find jobs for blacks and blacks for jobs. It starts with a Senator looking for a liberal issue to campaign on. When his wife mentions that the CIA has no black agents, the Senator has his cause. His success backfires at the point where the black protagonist, having completed the CIA's training, trains a Chicago gang in guerrilla techniques to wage race warfare.

Mr. Greenlee, who does not feel his career has been noticeably furthered by agents, plans to handle film rights in "Spook" himself. "People began getting interested in the movie possibilities in London," he told me. "A friend of mine, Calvin Lockhart—a black film actor from the Bahamas—has been showing it around. He was in 'Joanna.' At present he's making 'Cotton Comes to Harlem' for Sam Goldwyn, Jr.

"Yes, I'd like to have Calvin play the lead if there's a picture of 'Spook'—and I'd like a black director, if possible. The one I have in mind is Melvin Van Peebles, the first black man to direct a feature film. He did 'The Story of a Three-Day Pass.'"

Greenlee has sold foreign rights to "Spook" in Holland, Finland, Sweden and Italy. Not yet accounted for are the countries in which he has spent time as a staff member of USIS: Iraq, Pakistan, Greece and Indonesia. So far as he knows, he will be passing the next few years in his native land. He has written a first-draft screenplay for "Spook," and in his baggage is the manuscript of a novel which preceded that one but which, according to the author, has never been scrutinized by editorial eye.

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SOC-4.01.2 The Spook Who
Sat By the Door